



NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, December 27, 2011



Janet Dolber, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Barbara Gaudette, Edward Palmer and Richard Griggs were in attendance. R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner was also present. Cindy Key, Associate member did not attend. One (1) Planning Board –vacancy, with no members of the public in attendance.

I. CITIZENS FORUM

None

II. ANR PLAN –REVIEW/DECISION

None

III. HERITAGE ZONING DISTRICT –VOTE TO SPONSOR

Zoning Amendment Article(s)

R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner advised the Planning Board that the Board of Selectmen, at its meeting of December 19, 2011, voted to call a Special Town Meeting for February 21, 2012 with a warrant closing date of January 12, 2012.

Janet Dolber asked if any communications were received from the prospective buyer and if they (Yag) had entered into a purchase and sales with the seller at this time. Barbara Gaudette indicated that she has not been in contact and suggested regardless whether or not they ultimately purchase the property, the proposed zoning changes will be beneficial for the property (and town) as the proposed amendments may offer additional opportunities for reuse of properties in the Heritage Zoning District. Board members questioned why the Oakhurst property had not been included in the Heritage District when it was originally adopted in the 1980's. Ms. Gaudette mentioned the prospects of a National Park designation would be beneficial for the town and potential reuse of the Oakhurst property.

Planning Board reviewed memorandum dated December 21, 2011 from the Community Planning & Development office concerning three (3) proposed zoning amendment articles: expanding the Heritage Zoning District §173-4 [Establishment of Zoning Map]; amending use table to allow "Office for administrative, executive, professional, sales and other similar uses" within the Heritage Zoning District (H) via the issuance of a special permit §173-12 [Table of Use Regulations] –Heritage Zoning District; and adding additional provisions to the Heritage bylaw aimed to provide greater flexibility and opportunity for reuse of historic structures §173-6 [Purpose of Heritage District].

Mr. Bechtholdt indicated that he has forwarded copies of proposed zoning amendments to Town Counsel for review, however as of this date has not received comments and as such suggested should the Planning Board vote to sponsor articles they make it contingent upon Town Counsel review. Mr. Bechtholdt explained to the Planning Board, proposed changes to the Heritage Zoning District is not specific to one property, all properties so designated would be subject to the amended provisions.

Upon motion duly made and seconded (Palmer) and seconded (Griggs) the Planning Board voted (4-0) to sponsor the following zoning amendment articles for consideration at the 2012 Special Town Meeting scheduled for February 21, 2012: (1.) §173-4 [Establishment of Zoning Map] –Heritage Zoning District: Amend Northbridge Zoning Bylaw Section 173-4 [Establishment of Zoning Map] by EXPANDING the Heritage Zoning District (H) to include the following parcels designated as Assessor Map 15 Parcel(s) 17 & 18; said parcels are located off Hill Street and are currently zoned Residential –One (R-1) & Residential –Three (R-3); (2.) §173-12 [Table of Use Regulations] –Heritage Zoning District: Amend Northbridge Zoning Bylaws Section 173-12 [Table of Use Regulations] by ALLOWING “office for administrative, executive, professional, sales and other similar uses” within the Heritage Zoning District (H) via the issuance of a special permit; & (3.) §173-6 [Purpose of Heritage District]: Amend Northbridge Zoning Bylaws Section 173-6 [Purpose of Heritage District] by ADDING additional provisions aimed to provide greater flexibility and opportunity for reuse of historic structures within the Heritage Zoning District.

Mr. Bechtholdt noted that he would check with Town Counsel on the status of its review and would also check with the Town Manager’s Office on when the warrant would be printed, so changes (if any) as suggested by Town Counsel would be incorporated. Mr. Bechtholdt advised the Planning Board that arrangements will be made for the Planning Board to hold its public hearing(s) on the proposed zoning amendments on Tuesday, January 24, 2012; a draft notice provided in the Planning Board packets. Mr. Bechtholdt indicated that notice would run in the local newspaper (Telegram & Gazette) as required with copy of same to be mailed to properties within the Heritage Zoning District.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Meeting Minutes- December 13, 2011

Upon motion duly made (Griggs) and seconded (Palmer) the Planning Board voted (4-0) to accept the meeting minutes of December 13, 2011.

Special Town Meeting –Tuesday, February 21, 2012

Point of information –see discussion above.

Zoning Amendment Article(s) –Schedule of Public Hearing(s)

Planning Board shall hold public hearing on Tuesday, January 24, 2012 for consideration of proposed zoning amendment articles regarding the Heritage Zoning District.

Planning Board –Vacancy

Point of information –no discussion.

Mail –Review

In addition to the mail listed (see attached) the Planning Board noted receipt of the following communications: (draft) Planning Board meeting minutes of December 13, 2011; (draft) Planning Board agendas for January 10, 2012 & January 24, 2012; memorandum dated December 20, 2011 from Sharon Susienka, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager concerning Board of Selectmen vote to call Special Town Meeting (February 21, 2012); memorandum dated December 21, 2011 from Community Planning & Development office concerning Heritage Zoning District; (draft) zoning amendment provisions; memorandum dated December 19, 2011 from Community Planning & Development office concerning

Heritage Zoning District; May 2011 Zoning map (reduced size); Assessor Map 15; Table of Use Regulations; (draft) Public Hearing Notice for January 24, 2012; letter dated December 21, 2011 from Inspector of Buildings; Assessor Map(s) 15, 15-A, 14-A, 6, 7, 5, 4, & 4-A; copy of Guidebook for Adopting Zoning Bylaws (January 2003) prepared by the Attorney General; License Routing Slip for 2147 Providence Road (Laurieann's Restaurant & Bar, Inc; memorandum dated December 19, 2011 from Community Planning & Development office concerning Camelot subdivision; memorandum dated December 14, 2011 from Community Planning & Development office concerning Heritage Zoning District (Oakhurst property); & copy of memorandum dated December 14, 2011 from Community Planning & Development office concerning Shining Rock Golf Clubhouse issuance of occupancy.

Other

Richard Griggs inquired about the Heritage zoning designation and questioned what happens if a building falls into disrepair. Ms. Gaudette suggested, unfortunately there are no provisions that would prohibit this from happening; advocating Northbridge has been fortunate that many of its historic buildings still remain however also noted that number or them have been lost; the Oakhurst property is one of the last residences from the Whitin era, if building were to be lost it would be very sad. Ms. Gaudette explained many towns have adopted what is called a Demolition Delay Bylaw where by local adoption, a General Bylaw provides opportunities for preservation of historic buildings; noting Northbridge had considered adoption before in 2002. Mr. Bechtholdt added that the state (Massachusetts Historical Commission) has a model bylaw for town's consideration, noting some towns have applied various time frames from as little as a few weeks to 12-months. Mr. Bechtholdt suggested he could prepare a draft for review at the Board's next meeting.

Upon motion duly made (Griggs) and seconded (Gaudette) the Planning Board voted (4-0) to sponsor Demolition Delay Bylaw (6-months/180-days) for consideration at the Special Town Meeting. Mr. Bechtholdt distributed copies of the Sexual Harassment Policy and reminded Board members that they need to complete the online State Ethics Conflict of Interest Training.

Adjournment

Having no additional business the Planning Board adjourned its meeting of Tuesday, December 27, 2011 at 7:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by Planning Board –

R. Gary Bechtholdt II
Town Planner

Cc: Town Clerk